We Claim:

1. A method of treating a kidney disease comprising administering an effective amount of a soyasaponin B_b to an animal in need thereof.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the kidney disease is polycystic kidney disease.

3. A method according to claim 2 further comprising administering an effective amount of soyasaponin B_a and/or soyasaponin B_c.

4. A method according to claim 1 wherein the soyasaponin B_b is given in an amount from about 1 to about 10 g/day.

5. A pharmaceutical composition for use in treating a kidney disease comprising an effective amount of a soyasaponin B_b in admixture with a suitable diluent or carrier.

6. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 5 further including soyasaponin B_a and/or soyasaponin B_c.

7. A nutraceutical composition for use in treating a kidney disease comprising an effective amount of a soyasaponin B_b in admixture with a suitable diluent or carrier.

8. A nutraceutical composition according to claim 7 further including soyasaponin B_a and/or soyasaponin B_c.

9. A method of isolating soyasaponin B_b from a sample comprising:

(a) solubilizing the sample in acidified aqueous alcohol;

(b) removing polar lipids by liquid chromatography;

(c) solubilizing the sample from (b) in aqueous alcohol;

(d) passing the sample from (c) through an anion exchange column;

(e) eluting the sample absorbed to column in (d) with an acidified aqueous alcohol; and

(f) purifying the sample from (e) by liquid chromatography and collecting fractions containing soyasaponin B_b.

10. A method according to claim 9 wherein the starting sample is soy molasses.

11. A method according to clam 9 wherein the sample is solubilized in step (c) in 50-80% ethanol.

12. A method according to claim 9 wherein the acidified acqueous alcohol is 80% ethanol with 5% formic acid.

13. A method according to claim 9 wherein the sample is purified in step (f) by passing the sample through a preparative hydrophobic interaction chromatographic column.

14. A method according to claim 13 wherein the preparative hydrophobic interaction column is hexadecyltrimethylammonium-substituted SP Sepharose.

15. A method according to claim 9 wherein the soyasaponin B_b isolated from step (f) is further purified by preparative liquid chromatography.

16. A method according to claim 1 wherein the soyasaponin B_b is obtained by a method comprising:

(a) solubilizing the sample in acidified aqueous alcohol;

(b) removing polar lipids by liquid chromatography;

(c) solubilizing the sample from (b) in aqueous alcohol;

(d) passing the sample from (c) through an anion exchange column;

(e) eluting the sample absorbed to column in (d) with an acidified aqueous alcohol; and

(f) purifying the sample from (e) by liquid chromatography and collecting fractions containing soyasaponin B_b.

17. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 5 wherein the soyasaponin B_b is obtained by a method comprising:

(a) solubilizing the sample in acidified aqueous alcohol;

(b) removing polar lipids by liquid chromatography;

(c) solubilizing the sample from (b) in aqueous alcohol;

(d) passing the sample from (c) through an anion exchange column;

(e) eluting the sample absorbed to column in (d) with an acidified aqueous alcohol; and

(f) purifying the sample from (e) by liquid chromatography and collecting fractions containing soyasaponin B_b.

18. A nutraceutical composition according to claim 7 wherein the soyasaponin B_b is obtained by a method comprising:

(a) solubilizing the sample in acidified aqueous alcohol;

(b) removing polar lipids by liquid chromatography;

(c) solubilizing the sample from (b) in aqueous alcohol;

(d) passing the sample from (c) through an anion exchange column;

(e) eluting the sample absorbed to column in (d) with an acidified aqueous alcohol; and

(f) purifying the sample from (e) by liquid chromatography and collecting fractions containing soyasaponin B_b.